THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JANUARY 14, 2025 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 24 • LATE CITY EDITION

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INDIA SUMMONS BANGLADESH ENVOY AMID BORDER FENCING ROW

India on Monday summoned Bangladesh's acting High Commissioner Nural Islam amid row over India's construction of fencing on the border

NO VIOLATION OF PROTOCOL, AGREEMENT: INDIA

With regard to security measures at the border, the Bangladesh envoy was told India observed all protocols and agreements between the two governments. Barbed wire fencing, border lighting, installation of technical devices are meant to secure the border, the Ministry of External Affairs said, adding that the focus is on tackling cross-border criminal activities

5 ARRESTED BY BSF FOR SMUGGLING ATTEMPT

- The Bangladesh diplomat was summoned a day after Dhaka conveyed to Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma its deep concerns over India's border security measures | **P9**
- Security forces on Monday arrested five people, including two from Bangladesh, for trying to smuggle goods across the border

535

BOTTLES OF PHENSEDYL, A NARCOTIC DRUG, WERE SEIZED FROM SMUGGLERS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Will keep promise on J&K statehood: Modi

Omar heaps praise on PM, thanks him for fair polls

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

INAUGURATING the strategic 6.4-km Z-Morh tunnel in Sonamarg, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he will keep promises made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, an apparent reference to the demand for the restoration of statehood voiced strongly by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"There is a time for every work. And the right work is going to happen at the right time," Modi said.

In his address, Abdullah, whose National Conference party is a member of the Opposition INDIA bloc, heaped praise on Modi, saying his heart says the PM would soon fulfill the promise of restoring statehood to J&K.

Omar's statement comes days after he wondered if the INDIA bloc should be wound up if it was cobbled together only for the Lok Sabha polls.

"My people, my cabinet colleagues and media ask me when will J&K get statehood again. I tell them the PM fulfilled his promise to hold elections in four months and my heart says that he would also fulfil his promise to restore J&K statehood," he said.

He also credited Modi for fair elections in J&K. "Not a single polling station needed re-polling. The credit for this goes to you, your associates and Election Commission," he said.

Through these infra projects, the PM kept his promise to bridge '*Dil ki doori* and *Delhi ki Doori*' (distance between hearts and Delhi), he added.

Narendra Modi (2nd from left) after inaugurating Z-Morh tunnel | PTI

Cruel fate: Penury, biting cold turn joy into sorrow

KARTHIK KK @ Mysuru

POVERTY can be excruciatingly cruel, and this heart-wrenching turn of events is proof. A 35-year-old man, filled with joy at the birth of his son, died in his sleep outside in Cheluvamba Hospital courtyard. His penury prevented him from taking shelter in the hospital dormitory from the biting cold, and succumbed to it after spending three nights outside.

Shivagopalaiah had come to Mysuru on Friday from Chowdalli village in Gundlupet taluk with hope in his heart, which turned to joy on the arrival of his newborn son that afternoon. His wife, Ashwathamma, had delivered a healthy baby boy via Caesarean-section, and their lives were filled with joy.

Yet, as she rested in the hospital's ICU with her newborn, Shivagopalaiah found himself sleeping outdoors, unable to afford even the nominal Rs 30 fee for the dormitory facility meant for caregivers and attendants of patients. Despite his hardships, he was determined to stay close, fearing he might be needed by the doctors at any moment as his wife and newborn baby were in the ICU.

People sleep outside Cheluvamba Hospital in Mysuru | UDAYSHANKAR S

Over three nights, he braved the cold, clinging to the joy of his son's birth while silently enduring his own struggles, physical and financial. But on Monday morning, that endurance ended as his lifeless body was discovered in the hospital's courtyard.

According to Suresh, a fellow attendant who had befriended him during the hospital stay, Shivagopalaiah's struggles were evident from the start. "He had no money, not even for a meal. We helped him get food, and one of the doctors gave him money to buy milk powder for the baby. He was so happy about the newborn baby..." **P5**

Devotees at the Ganga in Prayagraj. The Maha Kumbh commenced on Monday after a gap of 12 years | PTI

MAHA KUMBH OPENS

Flowing waters & faith: 1.5 cr take dip

PARAMITA GHOSH @ Prayagraj

EARLY in the morning at the Kumbh, Vedic chants and Ram bhajans can be heard from every direction, as the faithful, towels on shoulders, make their way to the banks of the Ganga for a holy dip. This morning, a light fog sits above the water; by mid-morning, it is all clear as if it were the fog of unreason.

As dawn broke over the Sangam on Monday, a sea of devotees took the holy dip on 'Paush Purnima', marking the commencement of Maha Kumbh 2025. More than 1.5 crore pilgrims took the dip on Monday, the UP government said.

For octogenarian Bhabani Bhowmik, a retired schoolteacher from Siliguri, the dip was a transformative experience. "I took Ganga Ji's name and when I came out, I felt no chill," she says. As the day unfolds, the rhythms of the Kumbh come alive. Boatman Nandkumar, from a neighbouring district, gazes longingly at the Sangam, hoping to bag a permit to ferry passengers. Brothers Gopal and Amit Mishra, meanwhile, tend to the spiritual needs of the bathers, applying sandalwood mark on their foreheads.

In this vast, swirling tapestry of humanity, individuals from all walks of life converge, each with their own story of spiritual seeking. Sabra, a Brazilian seeker, says, "I was born into a Catholic family, but did not practice it. For the last year, I've been chanting and getting my faith back."

Out of the blue, the bhule bhatkey shivir (lost-and-found camp) where a human being reinforces his faith in another, springs to life. A mother looks for her son, another seeks her 'Sushila mausi', and a stranger appeals to an Ashokda to return. As the day wears on, these names are replaced by others.

KMF, CHAI POINT AT KUMBH: P5
RELATED STORIES: P10

CLP exposes rift in CM, DyCM camps

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

THE Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting convened by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at a hotel here on Monday evening, to send out a message that there was no factionalism within the party, only exposed the differences between the CM's and DyCM DK Shivakumar's camps. In his speech, Shivakumar, giving all credit for implementation of the state-of-the-art District Congress office at Belagavi to Women and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, irked PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi, the present district minister. Satish went on to the dais and sought a separate appointment with Surjewala on Tuesday.

He took strong exception to Shivakumar's statement, saying, "It is an insult to us (brothers Satish and Ramesh Jarkiholi) as we initiated the process. Ramesh identified the site and I spent Rs 3 crore from my own pocket," Satish claimed.

He elaborated on his contribution to the party, saying he had won Chikkodi LS seat through his daughter Priyanka and the Shiggaon by-polls, and also claimed to have helped Laxmi politically by backing her son Mrinal in the 2024 LS polls. **P4**

US Consulate

The US Consulate in Bengaluru will hold its 'site dedication' ceremony on Jan 17, unveiling its location, likely in either the Central Business District or Whitefield, a senior Consulate official told *TNIE* | **P2**

EXPRESS READ

Man from Bihar held for slashing udders of cows

Bengaluru: The Cottonpet police in Bengaluru on Monday arrested a man on charges of slashing the udders of three cows, police said Police identified the man as Sheikh Nasru (30) from Bihar. Last year, he was caught for inserting a pipe into the private parts of a cow. **P4**

Rupee sinks to record low, settles 66p down at 86.7 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee logged its steepest single-day fall in nearly two years and ended the session 66 paise down at its historic low of 86.70 against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by a stronger American currency and surging crude oil prices. The fall of 66 paise in one session was the steepest since February 6, 2023 when the unit had lost 68 paise.

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